

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, CENTERS FOR MEDICARE AND MEDICAID SERVICES

Washington, DC, June 17, 2014.

Hon. ROY BLUNT,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR BLUNT: Thank you for your letter regarding the recent news story about employees of Serco, a contractor to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which provides eligibility support for the Federally-facilitated Marketplace (Marketplace). CMS is committed to working with Serco, and all of CMS's contractors, to ensure that federal funds are spent appropriately and that performance expectations are clear and monitored. We closely monitor the work Serco is doing regarding the number of employees it has, including staff allocation by job function, and we are confident that the balance is appropriate.

On April 22, CMS was notified by Serco of a request for an interview with KMOV, a local news station in St. Louis, Missouri, regarding the allegations of misconduct at its Wentzville, Missouri facility. Upon learning about the allegations, CMS formally requested Serco to conduct a compliance investigation for the purpose of reviewing the allegations of inappropriate employee conduct at its Wentzville, Missouri facility as cited in the news story and to take any necessary steps to address them. At this time, CMS does not have any knowledge of similar allegations taking place at any of Serco's other facilities.

Regarding adjustments of Serco staffing levels in response to Marketplace workload, total Serco workforce numbers and patterns vary and are adjusted based on the needs of the contract. Currently, Serco has approximately 3,000 employees stationed among its four locations. The number of Serco staff is reviewed on a regular basis by CMS and adjustments to staffing levels are made as appropriate based on the workload and requirements of the contract. Over the course of open enrollment, and now after open enrollment, CMS has adjusted Serco's workforce to accommodate changing operational needs. For example, CMS adjusted the workforce to process more paper applications last fall, when HealthCare.gov had technical problems, and then again for calling consumers to help them take the necessary steps to complete their enrollment.

For oversight purposes, CMS monitors Serco's performance through a range of contractually required reports, meetings and site visits. CMS receives daily production and staffing reports from Serco, and communicates with Serco representatives daily to discuss operations and policy guidance to ensure adequate staffing levels and operational priorities. CMS has also conducted site visits across all four Serco facilities and is in constant communication with Serco's management team.

Regarding the question of oversight or other actions to ensure compliance with contract terms, in accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 42.15, CMS will complete an annual evaluation of Serco utilizing the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System at the end of the base period. In the event of inappropriate activity related to payments already made to Serco, CMS would take recourse that is legally and contractually allowed.

Concerning document production and consumer notifications, since October 1, 2013, Serco has handled more than 1 million documents related to the Marketplace and made

1.4 million outbound phone calls to Marketplace applicants. Serco performs a number of duties for CMS other than processing initial paper applications. Serco workers also are involved with verifying information, processing exemptions, resolving conflicts of information, and calling consumers to obtain missing information or necessary documentation.

Finally, in consideration of whether Serco would be granted a one-year option period at the end of the contract's one-year base period, CMS will conduct a review of the quality of the work currently being performed by the contractor, determine whether the contractor has met the terms and conditions of the contract thus far, and assess if the requirement covered by the option continues to fulfill an existing government need. CMS's review will fulfill all of the conditions prescribed in FAR 17.207, Exercise of Options.

I understand your concerns and appreciate you bringing them to my attention. I will also provide a copy of this response to Senator Lamar Alexander. Once again, thank you for your letter and do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further thoughts or concerns.

Sincerely,

MARILYN TAVENNER,
Administrator.

Mr. BLUNT. I yield the floor and ask unanimous consent that we move to the quorum call and that the time be equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE PLIGHT OF MERIAM IBRAHIM

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, the Senator from Texas is on his way to the floor to talk about Meriam Ibrahim. He has been regularly joined by other Senators, including Senators AYOTTE, RUBIO, INHOFE, SHAHEEN, and COONS and many others who share my deep concern. Hundreds of Tennesseans have written and called my office about this situation.

I am outraged by this blatant attack on religious freedom, and I join my colleagues in demanding that the President and the State Department act immediately to help Ms. Ibrahim.

Meriam found herself in this situation because she was born to a Muslim father and an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian mother. Meriam's father abandoned the family when Meriam was 6 years old, so she was raised as a Christian. Meriam later married Daniel, an American citizen, who is also a Christian. The Sudanese Government considers Meriam a Muslim, even though she is a devout Christian.

When Meriam was ordered to renounce her faith, she refused. For that crime, the Sudanese Government condemned her to death. She was convicted and sentenced to receive 100

lashes and then be hanged. To make matters worse, she was pregnant with her daughter when this happened. Her son is less than 2 years old and was forced to live in a women's prison outside Khartoum, where they were held until Monday. Monday we learned Meriam was to be released, but that was a celebration that was short-lived because yesterday she and her family were detained at the airport.

President Obama and the State Department should immediately demand that the Sudanese Government follow their own court's orders and release Meriam and her family. The harassment and targeting of this family must stop immediately. The State Department should be prepared to act quickly to help them leave Sudan as soon as possible.

Occasionally we wonder if words spoken on this floor matter, but in this case I believe they have. This is an outrageous incident that has seared the conscience of Americans and people all over the world. I know in Tennessee many families care about it. I wish to thank Senator CRUZ as well as Senators AYOTTE and RUBIO and INHOFE and SHAHEEN and COONS—Senators on both sides of the aisle—who have used this forum, this tribunal, to talk about the case of Meriam Ibrahim and her plight. It is our hope that the attention, the spotlight placed on this matter will help her be released and that our administration will continue its efforts to register our strong concern.

I am here to express the feelings of hundreds of Tennesseans but also to congratulate Senator CRUZ and the other Senators on both sides of the aisle who have done such an effective job of letting the world know about Meriam Ibrahim and her plight.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for 7 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PLIGHT OF MERIAM IBRAHIM

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I rise today to discuss a heartbreaking tragedy that has focused the attention of people across America and people across the world. I rise today to discuss the plight of Meriam Ibrahim. Meriam is a young wife and a young mother. Meriam has two children. She has a son Martin, who is 20 months old, and she has a newborn baby girl Maya, who was just recently born.

Now, the birth of a little girl should be a cause for celebration. But I am sorry to tell you, Madam President, that Meriam gave birth to Maya while in leg irons in a prison in Sudan.

Meriam is married to a U.S. citizen, Daniel. Her two children are American citizens. Why was Meriam in leg irons in a prison cell in Sudan? She was

there because the Government of Sudan had sentenced her to receive 100 lashes and to hang by the neck until dead for the crime of being a Christian.

That is Meriam's only crime in Sudan, and for that crime she was sentenced to be tortured and executed.

Meriam was told by the Government of Sudan that if she would merely renounce Jesus Christ, she would be spared that horrible sentence. But Meriam told her captors that she would not and could not renounce Christ.

All of us value the religious liberty that is protected here in America that is precious to each and every one of us, and yet I would venture, very few, if any of us, have been tested in our faith the way Meriam has.

Now, 2 days ago, we had cause for celebration. Two days ago, the Government of Sudan—responding to the international outcry that this young wife and mother would be tortured and murdered for being a Christian—released Meriam. There were many prayers of thanksgiving 2 days ago.

Yet, Madam President, I am very sorry to tell you that yesterday, while Meriam was at the airport preparing to leave and come to America with her husband and her two little babies, armed thugs came to the airport and seized Meriam. She is back in a prison in Sudan.

This is wrong. This is an outrage. This calls for prayers across this country. And this calls for U.S. leadership.

I would humbly call upon President Obama to speak out for Meriam. There is no one who has a bully pulpit like the President of the United States. This is a case that cries for Presidential leadership. Her husband is an American from New Hampshire. Her babies are Americans. And this is a grotesque example of religious persecution. I would note that this should not be a cause for partisan division. Indeed, in this Chamber, I am pleased to have joined with Senator SHAHEEN, a Democrat from New Hampshire, and Senator AYOTTE, a Republican from New Hampshire, in legislation that would provide immediate relief for Meriam to allow her to come to America.

It is my hope this body can operate quickly in a bipartisan, in a unanimous manner, to act on that legislation so we can stand together. I am encouraged that so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have stood and fought for Meriam. We need to speak with one uniform voice.

I hope, in particular—I would urge, in particular—President Obama to stand and add his clear voice, to say to the Government of Sudan: Free Meriam Ibrahim.

I would ask everyone watching this to lift her up in your prayers and to speak out.

Sudan, 2 days ago, responded to the international pressure and released her. Now that they have apparently had a change of heart and forcibly captured her, we need to speak even louder. We need to speak for Meriam

Ibrahim because it is wrong for anyone—especially this young wife and mother—to be subject to torture and murder for being a Christian. That is unequivocally wrong, and we need to speak in one voice.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about the Export-Import Bank—the program that is a vital tool of U.S. manufacturers and small businesses across the United States of America to help them grow jobs and gain access to international markets.

There has been a lot written in the last 24, 48 hours about this because there has been a lot of discussion about people who have previously supported the program—maybe voted for it five or six times—and now all of a sudden have either amnesia or have forgotten what is so important about this program.

I am here this morning to talk about this issue because I believe it is so vital to the U.S. economy and to the economic opportunities and challenges we face.

The Export-Import Bank basically gives assistance in the form of securitizing loans that are sought by the private sector when a U.S. company tries to sell a product overseas.

You can imagine that if you are a U.S. manufacturer—and you could be involved in lots of different things; in our State, there is everything from aviation to grain silos to music stands to agricultural products—when you go and say, well, we want to sell to Ethiopia or we want to sell to a South American country or we want to sell to an Asian country—for example, a small businessperson in the State of Washington says: Well, OK, I have found a customer in one of those countries for my product—and I will use grain silos as example because there is a company in our State that now sells grain silos to 82 different countries around the globe—that customer in that country says: Well, how am I going to finance this deal? It is not exactly like this sophistication is present in every one of these developing countries. Yet we want U.S. products to be sold into these developing countries.

I guess we could sit back on our laurels and just think it is all going to happen on its own and let the Europeans sell products into that market or let the Chinese sell products into that market or we could hustle—which is what the United States of America does—and we can figure out a way to secure those deals when those customers have a challenge of financing within their country.

Now, it does not mean that the Export-Import Bank finances all of those deals. It means it provides, in a lot of cases, security so that when a private

bank does finance the sale of that deal, there is certainty and predictability.

Why is that important? Well, as one vice president of a bank that operates in 19 different States and the District of Columbia told us: Most banks, even those as large as—in this case—PNC, cannot alone take risks for helping a U.S. company sell in countries with governments that may be less stable than the United States of America.

It makes sense. Right. Look at what we are seeing around the globe. We are seeing lots of change. You cannot count on a deal and account for the capricious nature of governments. If someone stiffes me in Pittsburgh, I will just go to a court in Pittsburgh and win a judgment against these individuals. Well, you cannot practically expand that to a government in Africa or in Asia. You cannot go to a court system here in the United States and say: Hey, that government failed to pay on that particular customer deal that was enacted. But you can, with the help of the Export-Import Bank, secure those loans and make sure that payment is received.

That is why so many small businesses across the State of Washington like and have used this program in conjunction with the private banking industry.

For example, there is a company: Manhasset music stands. I love that company because it makes music stands somewhat like this podium I am speaking in front of that is used for placement of music, and they sell all over the globe. In fact, China is one of their best customers. I love that there is a place in Yakima, WA, that is figuring out how to sell a U.S.-manufactured product in China and that they are continuing to compete with the Chinese every day and winning that battle.

I am so proud that company uses the Export-Import Bank to reduce their risk to those customers because those customers live in a place where the banking and security might not be there.

Why is this so important? Well, first of all, 95 percent of consumers in the world live outside of the United States of America. So unless we just want to sell to people in the United States of America, we better have a pretty good strategy of how we are going to sell to people outside of the United States of America.

So with 95 percent of consumers outside of the United States of America and a rising middle class around the globe—the middle class is going to double in the next 20 years. It is going to double. That means more people with more disposable income to buy products and to use services that are so critical.

Take aviation, for example. Because there is a rising middle class around the globe and a lot more people want to travel, that is 35,000 new airplanes that are in demand. That is how many we are going to have to build over the next 20 years—35,000 new airplanes.